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ABSTRACT

This collection of abstracts is part of a continuing series providing information on recent doctoral dissertations. The 15 titles deal with a variety of topics, including the following: personal expressiveness in creative writing programs; generative rhetoric and writing performance; the effects of sentence combining exercises on syntactic maturity, writing quality, reading ability, and student attitudes; lyric poetry writing; transformational grammar; peer evaluation of student writing; the effects of instruction in five components of the writing process on writing quality and syntactic complexity; remedial writing instruction; a language study approach to college freshman composition; teaching editing; the Iowa Writers' Workshop; a structured program for teaching composition in the secondary school; changing patterns in the teaching of composition from 1930 to 1976; and student awareness of teacher criteria for evaluating writing as an element in the composing process. (FL)

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Abstracts of the following dissertations are included in this collection:

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PERSONAL EXPRESSIVENESS IN CREATIVE WRITING PROGRAMS

Caldwell, Jane Milner

THE EFFECTS OF A GENERATIVE RHETORIC PROGRAM ON WRITING PERFORMANCE OF ELEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS

Callaghan, Thomas Francis

THE EFFECTS OF SENTENCE-COMBINING EXERCISES ON THE SYNTACTIC MATURITY, QUALITY OF WRITING, READING ABILITY, AND ATTITUDES OF NINTH GRADE STUDENTS

German, Light Bailey

THE TEACHING OF LYRIC POETRY WRITING AS PART OF THE FRESHMAN ENGLISH PROGRAM

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AN INVESTIGATION OF STUDENT AWARENESS OF TEACHER CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING WRITING AS AN ELEMENT IN THE COMPOSING PROCESS

PERSONAL EXPRESSIVENESS IN CREATIVE WRITING PROGRAMS
Order No. 7816235

BOUCHARD, Lois Kalb, Ed.D. University of Massachusetts, 1978. 216pp. Director: Professor Masha K. Rudman

This study examines personal expressiveness, or verbalization that expresses a person, and discusses it in the context of creative writing programs. It attempts both a rationale and a basis for curriculum design in expressive and literary writing and in the accompanying teacher-preparation programs.

Chapter I notes that creative writing programs provide "places" in the school curriculum where aspects of personal expressiveness are typically given room, e.g., in assignments about one's life experiences, one's friendships, one's family, etc., which are allowed expression in personal statements, narratives, dialogue, etc. However, despite the popularity and seeming usefulness of personal expressiveness as a notion, it is neither agreed upon, defined, isolated, nor discussed at any length in the literature on the teaching of creative writing. Certain educators offer differing definitions of personal expressiveness, while others omit it.

Chapter II investigates personal expressiveness in the programs and theories of creative writing teachers and theorists for concurrences and disagreements. A few overemphasize formal elements. Many are concerned with depth of feeling and the authentic aspects of expressive and literary writing. Philosophers and psychologists recognize the complexity of personal expressiveness and its roots in preverbal experience. They stress the difficulty as well as the importance of expressing such experience in appropriate symbols. They also discuss audience, free association, and the illusional aspects of art.

Chapter III explains the need for separating and categorizing the elements mentioned by the several authors reviewed. It locates among those authors consensus and disagreement about the categories, which consist of aims of writing, forms, processes, qualities, audiences, and evaluations. The combination of the elements of writing constitute a definition of personal expressiveness in creative writing. The elements of writing are also related to elements of pedagogy, and particularly to open education, to form a description of a personally expressive writing program.

Chapter IV uses the elements of writing to analyze five published programs which ostensibly include personal expressiveness. Based upon this analysis, programs and a bibliography are recommended for preschool education through high school.

In Chapter V, elements of creative writing are compared with the elements of basic writing skills in a discussion of individualized writing. A recommendation for a writing component in teacher-preparation programs is firmly made. It is concluded that analysis of writing into its several parts is important for the establishment of writing in school curricula, for the promotion in schools of the holistic processes of expressive and literary writing, and for the establishment in schools of the value of processes of writing as distinct from the perfection of products. This study claims that the writing process is a crucial part of a school curriculum separate from any later product which can be measured in terms of standards. Although it does not scoff at standards for written products, or at defining and measuring editing skills, this study suggests that we can speak of an epistemology, related to processes of writing in diverse forms, which we cannot, and indeed need not, contain in our grading systems and S.A.T.S.

THE EFFECTS OF A GENERATIVE RHETORIC PROGRAM ON WRITING PERFORMANCE OF ELEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS
Order No. 7815988

CALDWELL, Jane Milner, Ed.D. Memphis State University, 1978. 141pp. Major Professor: C. Lamar Thompson

The problem investigated by this dissertation was whether student writing performance improved more after a course in the Christensen Rhetoric Program than after a traditional composition course and what correlation there was between the student's I.Q. and writing ability. The experimental group was composed of twenty subjects in the eleventh grade who were taught the Christensen method one class period a week for thirty-one weeks. The control group was composed of fifteen subjects in the eleventh grade who were taught the traditional composition course one class period a week for thirty-one weeks. The two groups were of the same sex and had similar socio-economic backgrounds. Their I.Q.'s as measured by the Otis Mental Ability Tests ranged from 106 to 144.

Pretest and posttest writing samples from the subjects were scored by a frequency count of the use of free modifiers, which the Christensen program teaches. The six free modifiers, or modifiers separated by commas from the independent clause, are the noun phrase, the prepositional phrase, the verb phrase, the absolute phrase, the relative clause, and the subordinate, or adverb, clause. A three-way analysis of variance measured the relationship between group, time of testing, and use of free modifiers. Significance was established at the .05 level. The Pearson product moment procedure measured the correlation between I.Q. and test scores.

Results showed that there was no significant difference in the pretest and posttest use of free modifiers by the experimental or control groups and that I.Q. is not a factor influencing writing performance. The major recommendation of this research would be that teachers use a frequency count of modifiers as a basis for grading in order to save time required by the overall rating system.

THE EFFECTS OF SENTENCE-COMBINING EXERCISES ON THE SYNTACTIC MATURITY, QUALITY OF WRITING, READING ABILITY, AND ATTITUDES OF NINTH GRADE STUDENTS
Order No. 7813980

CALLAGHAN, Thomas Francis, Ed.D. State University of New York at Buffalo, 1977. 133pp.

The Problem

This study examined the effects of written and oral sentence-combining exercises on the growth of syntactic maturity, reading ability, attitudes, and overall quality of writing of ninth grade students. One control and three different method groups tested the amount and type of practice necessary to achieve significant growth. Tests were employed to determine whether rates of growth in syntactic maturity were different for students of initially different levels of syntactic maturity. Papers written by one student during the course of instruction were examined for developmental and modal syntactic trends. A set of posttest method and control papers were examined for differences in overall quality of writing. Follow-up papers written 3 months after the end of instruction were examined for stability of gains in syntactic maturity.

The Procedures

The sample consisted of 580 ninth grade students in 36 classes in seven different schools. Four urban, three suburban, and two Catholic school teachers were involved in teaching the classes, each teaching four classes. Students wrote four papers at both pre and posttest in the narrative, descriptive, expository, and argumentative modes. They also completed two forms of the same reading test and a class attitude questionnaire at both pre and posttest. A set of 50 treatment and control posttest expository papers was examined for differences in overall quality by 20 raters using an analytical scale.

During the course of one school year students worked on oral and written sentence-combining exercises which provided practice in embedding and free modification. Method one completed twice as many exercises as methods two and three. Methods two and three were identical except for the addition of oral exercises in method three. Syntactic maturity was measured by mean T-unit length and the number of final free modifiers based on an analysis of 45 pre and posttest T-units taken from the papers of a random sample of one-third of the students in each of the teachers' classes.

The Findings

One and two way multivariate analyses of covariance, covarying on the pretest syntactic and reading measures, were employed to determine whether the overall gains differed according to treatment, teacher, or social class. The probabilities of the overall multivariate F ratios were less than .0002, .0001, and .0001 respectively. Interactions were not significant. Univariate F ratios showed significant differences for T-unit length and especially for the number of final free modifiers. There were no significant gains in reading, nor were there differences in the growth of syntactic maturity within the three treatment groups. Polynomial regression techniques determined no differences in the rate of growth in syntactic maturity for students of initially different levels of syntactic maturity. There were significant positive changes in student attitudes toward sentence-combining practice and toward the revision of compositions between pre and posttest and between treatment and control. Case study analysis indicated some syntactic differences in papers according to time written during the treatment or mode of writing. Some erosion of gains in syntactic maturity was apparent in follow-up papers.

Conclusions

Sentence-combining practice greatly enhances the development of syntactic maturity in ninth graders as measured by samples of the students' writing. This is especially evident in the use of final free modification, a characteristic of adult professional writing. A moderate amount of the exercises, about 15 or 20 sessions, produces as significant results as a much greater number of exercises. The use of oral-choral activities in conjunction with sentence-combining exercises may not produce growth significantly different from that resulting from the written exercises.

Significant differences in effects according to teacher may indicate that teacher motivation and effort are as important in sentence-combining as in any other aspect of the curriculum. However, significant effects according to social class of students may indicate that the academic press for achievement in the school and the neighborhood make a difference in the achievement of syntactic growth.

The non-significance of gains in reading and the lack of significant differences between treatment and control in the overall quality of writing indicate that the most we can claim for the effects of sentence-combining practice is that it has great influence on one aspect of writing – syntactic fluency. It cannot be claimed, however, that it can do the work of an entire writing program.

Finally, the positive changes in student attitudes toward the revision of compositions and the sentence-combining exercises themselves show that sentence-combining is a welcome addition to the English curriculum.

THE TEACHING OF LYRIC POETRY WRITING AS PART OF THE FRESHMAN ENGLISH PROGRAM

Order No. 7817638

GERMAN, Light Bailey, Ph.D. The University of Texas at Austin, 1978. 113pp. Supervisor: James L. Kinneavy

The design of this quasi-experimental study was a two group, nonrandomized control group, pretest-posttest design. The study was a short term investigation lasting for two months in the fall of 1977 at Concordia Lutheran College, Austin, Texas. The null hypothesis for this study was the following: There will be no difference in the descriptive writing product between students given the traditional expository approach plus lyric poetry writing training and those given only the traditional approach. The hypothesis was rejected on four of the six variables tested, the direction of difference favoring the control group on three of the four variables that showed a significant difference.

In addition to a traditional expository writing course, the freshmen in the experimental group were given instruction in lyric poetry writing; the control group was given the same basic expository course plus a placebo of short prose assignments. Both groups were also exposed to identical special group-interaction techniques. The pretest and posttest for both groups was the writing of a short descriptive paragraph. Five readers counted the number of figures of speech and concrete details within each paragraph. The control group showed more gain. The teaching of lyric poetry writing seemed not to affect the writing of descriptive expository prose.

A STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF TRANSFORMATIONAL GRAMMAR ON THE WRITING SKILLS OF SEVENTH GRADERS

Order No. 7821178

HARTER, Michael Thomas, Ph.D. Ohio University, 1978. 147pp. Director of Dissertation: Dr. Don Leighty

This investigation is designed to answer the question: can the study and application of transformational grammar result in a more effective development of students' writing skills than can be achieved through the study and application of traditional grammar? Using the sentence as the object of analysis, this study compares the effects of the two systems of grammar instruction on the following variables: 1) proportion of well-formed sentences; 2) structural complexity of sentences; and 3) incidence of specific kinds of errors in the malformed sentences.

During a one year period, four Cambridge, Ohio, Middle School seventh grade groups comprised of 110 students participated in the research project. Two groups studied and applied transformational grammar principles derived from materials prepared by the researcher while the other two groups studied and applied traditional grammar principles derived from a commercially published traditional grammar text. At the beginning of the study, pre-treatment writing samples were elicited from all 110 students, and eight months later post-treatment writing samples were obtained. Each student's writing samples were examined sentence by sentence and each sample was assigned a proportion of well-formed sentences score, a structural complexity score, and five incidence of error scores based on the occurrence of the five specific classes of errors. Data were initially analyzed by using a two-by-two analysis of covariance blocking design in which the pre-treatment measure on each variable functioned as a covariate. When it was discovered that a major assumption regarding homogeneity of regression coefficients had been violated, the post-treatment data were analyzed by using a two-by-two analysis of variance blocking design.

Results of the analysis showed that although the two groups of students who received instruction in transformational grammar obtained higher proportions of well-formed sentences scores than did the students who received instruction in traditional grammar, the differences were not significantly different. Conversely, the students who received instruction in traditional grammar achieved significantly higher structural complexity scores than did the students who received instruction in transformational grammar. Post hoc analysis of writing samples revealed, however, that the traditional grammar students used a far greater number of coordination transformations per sentence than did the transformational grammar students; therefore, a stringing phenomenon appeared to contribute extensively to the difference between the groups on the structural complexity variable. Moreover, the fact that the technique normally used to measure structural complexity in sentences lacks the capability to adjust for an unusually high incidence of coordination operations indicates that future research activities should be directed toward development of an instrument that can be used to measure more effectively the structural complexity of sentences.

Analysis of the incidence of error scores showed that the transformational grammar groups made significantly fewer errors in one error classification than did the traditional grammar groups. Analysis of the scores in the other four error classes showed that the transformational grammar students generally committed fewer errors although the differences were not significant.

Because of the plethora of conflicting findings which have emanated from the studies conducted to date including the present one, the major questions regarding the effectiveness of transformational grammar for assisting students to write sentences still have not been conclusively answered. Much of this conclusiveness appears to be the result of a combination of factors, i.e., the brevity of the time period used to conduct the studies and oftentimes basic flaws in research design. It is therefore recommended that a very carefully designed longitudinal study of at least three years in duration be conducted in order to provide definitive answers to the many questions surrounding the use of transformational grammar for developing writing skills.

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE IMPACT ON STUDENT WRITING OF PEER EVALUATION Order No. 7810076

JONES, Thelma Ludwig, Ph.D. Michigan State University, 1977. 157pp.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact occurring on student writing from the evaluation of the students' peers. The researcher examined the impact of peer evaluation on narrative, description, and analysis writing of male and female college-oriented seniors and examined the impact within content, structure, paragraph structure, sentence structure, diction, and mechanics. The researcher further studied self-initiated student changes, praise, and corrections remaining for instructor marking. Finally, an inductively determined grouping of the student corrections was included in this research.

Methods of the Study

A sample population of college-oriented high school seniors was divided into groups and used a Check Sheet to evaluate their peers' papers. These comments on the Check Sheet were then recorded on note cards and computer cards, coded by student number to indicate sex, hour, grade level (the few juniors in the class were dropped from the study), type of writing, nature of response, general category of the response (content, structure, paragraph structure, sentence structure, diction, mechanics, and a few special notations), and the specific response within the category. From two sets of papers from one class, an inductive grouping of the student responses was made. This information, arranged and totaled by the computer, was analyzed to answer nineteen questions.

The answers to these questions appear in "Major Findings of the Study."

Major Findings of the Study

1. Students accept more criticisms from their peers than they refuse. 2. Seventy-two percent of the criticisms accepted and acted upon resulted in an improved paper, and, for a description, the students acted for an improved paper upon 76 percent of the criticisms accepted. 3. About 60 percent of the self-initiated revisions resulted in an improved paper. 4. Approximately five errors remained on each paper for teacher correction. 5. The students, through peer evaluation or self-initiated revision, corrected about 60 percent of their own errors. 6. Females tended to give more criticisms, to respond more favorably to criticism, and to revise with greater care. 7. The largest number of corrections and revisions for improvement were in the category of diction. 8. Those individual students who gave the most criticisms tended to receive the most criticisms. 9. Although a student may initially refuse to accept criticisms, his peers patiently continued to correct his papers. 10. Males tended to correct by asking questions and females tended to rewrite for their peers. Although students usually accepted more corrections than they refused, they tended to refuse more the broad suggestions about thesis structure and content. 11. Several subjective observations devolved from this study. The researcher noted the enjoyment of the students as they shared their writings. Furthermore, their participation in peer evaluation freed the teacher for individual conferences. This inter-communication among students and teacher provided a pleasant, sharing, classroom climate.

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE EFFECT OF INSTRUCTION IN FIVE COMPONENTS OF THE WRITING PROCESS ON THE QUALITY AND THE SYNTACTIC COMPLEXITY OF STUDENT WRITING Order No. 7819765

MORIARTY, David John, Ed.D. Boston University School of Education, 1978. 157pp. Major Professor: William L. Smith

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of instruction in five components of the writing process on the syntactic complexity (as measured by words per T-unit) and quality of student writing. Forty-eight high school subjects received instruction in the following five components of the writing process:

1. Selecting a subject.
2. Creating a design.
3. Writing for an audience.
4. Converting telling details to showing details.
5. Rewriting.

Specifically, this study investigated the following five problems:

1. The effect of teaching the five components of writing on the syntactic complexity and the quality of student writing.
2. The effect of teaching the "rewrite" on the syntactic complexity and the quality of student writing.
3. The difference in writing achievement between males and females after having received instruction in the five writing components.
4. The difference in the writing achievement level of tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade students.
5. Which one of the five components accounts for the highest increase in the syntactic complexity and the quality of student writing.

Instruction was provided in each of the components for two weeks, after which a writing sample was obtained, yielding a total of five writing samples over a ten-week period. In addition, three writing samples were obtained (from a teacher-assigned topic) as part of the pre-test sample. The post test also yielded three writing samples (from the same teacher-assigned topic), the third again being a rewrite of the first writing sample of the post test. Each subject, therefore, contributed a total of eleven writing samples for analysis.

Each of the eleven writing samples was analyzed for T-unit length to determine if and when, in the sequence of instruction in each of the five components, syntactic growth occurred, and the degree to which growth was influenced by grade, sex, and instruction in rewriting techniques. All eleven writing samples were also analyzed for quality by using three trained raters who assigned a holistic score to each sample.

A four-way ANOVA was used to analyze the data for both syntactic complexity and quality and showed that instruction in the five components succeeded significantly in increasing T-unit length and quality ratings over the pre-test writing scores. Following instruction in rewriting, however, neither T-unit length nor quality showed any significant gain on the post test. Grade and sex differences were also found to be insignificant.

The most significant increase in T-unit length and quality rating occurred in component four (converting telling details to showing details). Subjects were elaborating far more in component four, and this improvement in quality was identified by an increase in the quality rating scores. Instruction in component three (writing for an audience) yielded the lowest gain syntactically and qualitatively. Component one (selecting a subject) scores were slightly higher syntactically than the pre-test but significantly higher in quality rating. Component two (creating a design) scores were almost the same as component one scores syntactically but higher in quality rating. Component five (rewriting) scores were higher than components one, two, or three in both syntactic complexity and quality rating but lower than component four scores.

THE EFFECTS OF SENTENCE-COMBINING EXERCISES ON SYNTACTIC MATURITY, QUALITY OF WRITING, READING ABILITY, AND ATTITUDES OF STUDENTS IN GRADE ELEVEN

Order No. 7814240

SULLIVAN, Maureen Ann, Ed.D. State University of New York at Buffalo, 1977. 166pp.

Problem

This study examined the effects of a sentence-combining program on the growth in syntactic maturity, the overall quality of writing, the reading ability, and the attitudes of students in Grade Eleven.

Procedures

Seven teachers from one urban and three suburban high schools volunteered to include the sentence-combining instruction in their writing programs. The sentence-combining workbook consisted of sentence problems of increasing complexity which involved the embedding of words, phrases, and clauses, substituting noun clauses, using sentence openers, and adding free modifiers.

Four intact English Eleven classes of each teacher were randomly assigned to one of three treatment groups or to a control group. One treatment group did 30 lessons; a second treatment group, 15 lessons; a third treatment group, the same 15 lessons with choral recitation. The fourth class was the control group.

Students in all classes wrote four pretest and four posttest writing samples in four modes: expository, narrative, descriptive, and persuasive. The Diagnostic Reading Tests Survey Section Form D was given as a pretest reading measure, and Form F as a posttest measure. Pretest and posttest attitude questionnaires were completed by the students.

A random sample of 174 pretest and posttest writing samples was used for the data analysis. The first forty-five T-units from the four pretest samples and from the four posttest samples were analyzed for mean T-unit length, frequency of final free modifiers per 100 T-units, and frequency of noun substitutes per 100 T-units.

The overall quality of the writing of 25 treatment group students was compared to that of 25 control group students.

A delayed posttest was given to students who had made gains in all three syntactic factors.

One student was randomly selected for a case study to discern developmental trends in his writing during the sentence-combining instruction.

Findings

The results of a one-way manova with covariates (pretests) eliminated indicated that the sentence-combining exercises strongly influenced growth in mean T-unit length ($p.=.03$) and growth in the use of noun substitutes in subject position ($p.=.03$). The probability levels of the univariate F-ratios for final free modifiers and for reading were not significant.

Polynomial regression of each posttest score of syntactic maturity on the corresponding pretest was performed. The results indicated that syntactic gains were made by students at all ability levels at about the same rate.

Students who had 15 lessons made gains as great or greater than those who had 30 lessons. There was no evidence that the addition of choral recitation made a significant difference.

There were significant positive changes in students' attitudes toward the value of sentence-combining exercises.

There was no significant difference found in the overall quality of the writing of the treatment group as compared to that of the control group.

The post-delayed test of the writing of 14 students showed that gains in mean T-unit length and in the use of noun substitutes in the subject position persisted, but that the gains in final free modifiers did not.

The case study of an average student from the 30-lesson treatment group indicated that growth in syntactic maturity was discernible about the third quarter of the year and continued to the end of the year.

Conclusions

Sentence-combining exercises did enhance the growth of syntactic maturity for students at all ability levels. The attitudes of the students toward sentence-combining exercises were more positive after the instruction than before.

Sentence-combining exercises did not have a significant effect on the overall quality of the students' writing or on their reading ability.

The findings of a parallel study in Grade Nine (Callaghan, 1977) are compared to the findings of this study.

IF NOT GRAMMAR, WHAT?—TAKING REMEDIAL WRITING INSTRUCTION SERIOUSLY Order No. 7811300

TAYLOR, Karl Kay, Ph.D. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1978. 430pp.

Considerable disagreement exists about remedial writing instruction. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the traditional approaches used to improve the writing of college students who require remedial attention and to determine if new approaches might be more effective. To illustrate the lack of seriousness paid to the problem of remediation, the five principal methods used in this country today were described -- those focusing on correctness, on fluidity, on the paragraph, on organization, and on style. After deficiencies in the five methodologies were pointed out, a new approach was offered, probing into oral communication as well as the cognitive problems affecting written language acquisition.

After considering the five popular methods of instruction, the organization seemed the most appropriate for this particular kind of student, but modifications would have to be made for the method to be successful. The experimental hypothesis of this study was remedial students would not benefit, to any great extent, from a typical rhetorical types or organization approach to composition because they lacked some degree of competence with the thinking skills or strategies upon which these types are based. Thus, it was hypothesized that these skills would be deficient, but they could be strengthened with special instruction. Thus, when college instructors employ the rhetorical types approach, they assume the cognitive skill, represented by a pattern, is intact. Consequently, teachers envision their task in the classroom as one of primarily teaching how to write a paper, not how to classify or compare or the like. They do not anticipate, to any significant degree, the necessity for centering their instruction on the concepts behind the composition.

In order to test this hypothesis, a freshman English class was selected as the experimental group, and three assignments were examined in depth: comparison/contrast, summary, and classification. For comparison/contrast, the students were given a packet of materials which moved progressively from pictures to analogies, and they were requested to demonstrate their powers of comparison in these exercises. In the case of summary, the students were supplied with a series of passages -- ranging in length and complexity from a dozen to several hundred words -- and asked to summarize them. For an examination of classification skills, the students classified an array of materials -- from blocks at the concrete level to letters to the editor at the formal level of operations.

The results seemed to confirm the hypothesis. It was found that the students could often select the correct response, but many had great difficulty correctly identifying and naming the precise relationship involved in comparison problems. When asked to summarize, they had difficulty with both brevity and accuracy; they were often unable to state the main idea accurately or in a minimum number of words. Although the students were able to classify at the perceptual level, they experienced trouble when faced with material which might be described as formal. These particular students had a rather narrow view of what was involved in classification -- little more than the sorting of data into the most obvious categories and without any particular regard for the relationship between the categories. However, despite their initial weakness in these skills, the students did improve, to some degree, in almost all instances. Therefore, the implication is that a rhetorical approach to remediation would not make sense at the college level unless the cognitive skills, on which this approach is based, are intact.

THE DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION OF A LANGUAGE STUDY APPROACH TO A COLLEGE COURSE IN FRESHMAN COMPOSITION Order No. 7822617

THOMPSON, Merle O'Rourke, Ph.D. The American University, 1978. 114pp.

The problem of the study was to develop an effective positive descriptive curriculum for a college course in Freshman Composition. The author's teaching, survey of applicable literature and further research evolved into a "Language Study" curriculum.

Curriculum development involved the writing of goals and objectives and a search in the disciplines of philosophy, anthropology, lexicology, grammar, semantics, rhetoric, and psychology for "Language Study" content and method. Curriculum evaluation was conducted in two general areas: improved student writing and reduced student writing anxiety.

Goals and objectives for the "Language Study" curriculum were extensions of those written by the Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC) Annandale English faculty for the regular Freshman Composition course. The NVCC faculty objectives require that each student at the completion of Freshman Composition write an essay that exhibits a clear thesis developed in detail, clear organization, consideration of audience, and relative freedom from error. The "Language Study" curriculum adds objectives specifying that each student receive positive descriptive instruction in the writing process and a college-level language study course content.

The interdisciplinary language descriptions yielded concepts that suggested content and method for a Freshman Composition course. The theories were translated into pedagogical constructs for such a course. Reading materials, classroom instruction materials, student exercises and writing topics derived from the concepts and constructs were formed into a cohesive curriculum. The author taught the resulting "Language Study" curriculum to three classes of Freshman Composition at NVCC Annandale during Winter Quarter, 1978. Forty-seven students completed the course and the evaluation program.

Holistic grading of entering and exiting essays determined improved student writing. Four NVCC Annandale faculty read and scored the essays. A t test on differences between paired means applied to the data indicated that student writing improved significantly. ($t=4.40$, $df=46$, $p<.001$)

To evaluate reduced student writing anxiety, the author designed a thirty item Likert-type attitude scale which was administered to students on entering and exiting the course. A t test on differences between paired means applied to the data indicated that student anxiety reduced significantly. ($t=3.38$, $df=46$, $p<.005$)

The author concluded that (1) the "Language Study" curriculum answers scholarly pleas for a positive descriptive Freshman Composition curriculum; (2) the curriculum provides students with a college level content; (3) the "Language Study" curriculum serves well as content while students successfully pursue writing skills essential to Freshman Composition; (4) language study reduces writing anxiety among students.

Student materials for the "Language Study" curriculum appear in the textbook Language and Reality (Sherman Oaks, California: Alfred Publishing Co., 1979). The theory, data, and evaluations are contained in this paper. Together they comprise a new classroom tested curriculum for Freshman Composition soundly based in theory.

TEACHING THE PROCESS OF EDITING Order No. 7804827

VAN DUSEN, Gerald Charles, D.A. The University of Michigan, 1977. 93pp. Chairman: Alan B. Howes

This study focuses upon some of the implications of and a few of the strategies for teaching basic writing at an "open door" community college. The purpose here is threefold: (1) to review recent studies concerning the social and physical classroom environment; (2) to recommend the means by which a writing instructor may exploit his own writing ability to a pedagogic end; and (3) to introduce a series of practical techniques for teaching the process of editing.

The study of "classroom ecology" is partly the measure of academic success as a function of classroom seating and social behavior. Classroom ecologists, whose studies have followed largely since 1960, have concluded that not only are such factors as age, sex, race, ethnicity, status, personality, and social stigma significant in the classroom seating choices students make, but also such factors have an influence upon student perception of academic success.

Usually the only prose composed by the instructor which students actually see is the fragmentary comments appearing at the bottom of a returned assignment. His "expertise" is a given by virtue of his institutional role. By becoming a classroom writer himself, following the recommendations proposed in this chapter, the instructor has the opportunity to facilitate three important tasks: (1) to open up a channel of discussion on matters of process and to encourage students to speak frankly about their frustrations and idiosyncracies; (2) to introduce relevant lessons of grammar in the natural environment of language instead of in the sterile environment of workbook exercises; and (3) to prepare students for the demanding task of revising one's prose, by directly demonstrating a variety of editorial and proofreading techniques in the very process of coaxing one's prose into final form. Such an attempt to demystify the composing process may expose the instructor to a certain degree of vulnerability, but in the recommended classroom ecology the exposure should prove less a liability than an asset in providing a dynamic model for discussion and instruction.

In the conventional writing class, teaching the process of editing is usually sabotaged by the nature and the number of assignments. But the editorial process, like cognitive and affective human development, is a natural process, taking cognizance of a student's tendency to learn by making mistakes. Two preliminary exercises, designed to provide students with an adequate conceptualization of what editing means, what it intends to do, and how the process can be of direct benefit in their writing, are illustrated as classroom activities. Thereafter, small group editorial work is described as not only advantageous for increasing the degree of social interaction discussed in the previous chapter, but also for increasing the amount and specificity of feedback the teacher can receive about who is responding how at a particular time. A three-level diagnostic model for classifying error, free of jargon and presented in the most elementary of terms, is offered for student use. Suggestions are further made for selecting members of small editorial groups, for stimulating student interaction, and for introducing the self-management phase of editing. Finally, the overall advantages and disadvantages of teaching editing as a classroom activity are reconsidered, and the special role of the instructor in the process is delineated.

EMERGENCE OF THE IOWA WRITERS' WORKSHOP Order No. 7822467

WILBERS, Stephen McCoy, Ph.D. The University of Iowa, 1978. 214pp. Supervisor: Professor John Leggett

The often-asked question--When was the Writers' Workshop founded?--is a surprisingly difficult one to answer. Nineteen-thirty might be suggested on the basis that this was the year in which the School of Letters was established. (The School of Letters served as a vehicle for Norman Foerster's innovation of allowing creative work to be submitted as the doctoral dissertation, a practice that distinguished the Iowa program from any other.) But a case also might be made for 1939, the year in which the term "Writers' Workshop" first appeared in the University Catalogue. One date is perhaps as likely as the other, but the real issue is not a problem of choosing between the two but one of correcting the mistaken notion inherent in the original question.

The terms "found" and "founder" are misleading because they imply that Iowa's program in writing was created in a single stroke, by a single person. A more accurate view would take into account the series of events and numerous figures who contributed to Iowa City's literary heritage, a heritage that proved fertile soil for the program's growth and development. Rather than being "founded," the Iowa Writers' Workshop evolved or emerged. It grew by increments and developed as the result of Midwestern Regionalism, an interest in creative writing as reflected and generated by Iowa City's Writers' Clubs, and the contributions of men like Clarke Fisher Ansley, Norman Foerster, and Paul Engle.

When Foerster announced in 1931 that the University of Iowa's School of Letters would accept "imaginative" writing for the Ph.D. thesis, he argued that creating and criticizing literature were as legitimate a means to understanding it as doing research in language or in literary history. He viewed "imaginative" writing as a discipline that fell within the realm of literary research in its broadest sense, and he defended his program on the basis that it provided "a rigorous and appropriate discipline" for all types of literary students.

Wilbur Schramm (who served from 1939 to 1941 as first Director of the Writers' Workshop) and Paul Engle (who served as Director from 1942 to 1966) likewise argued that the imagination had a rightful status within the academy. But it was Paul Engle who established the Workshop's reputation as the finest program in the country. Owing to Engle's peculiar genius and remarkable determination, the Iowa Writers' Workshop grew from a regional center of literary activity to an institution in American letters.

A STRUCTURED PROGRAM FOR TEACHING COMPOSITION IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH CLASSES Order No. 7818913

WOOD, Betty Wilson, Ph.D. The University of Alabama, 1977. 182pp.

This study attempted to test the relative effectiveness of a structured program for the teaching of composition as compared with a traditional textbook grammar-oriented program.

An experimental program THE HOUSE THAT WORDS BUILT, BOOK II was designed by the researcher and tested in an experimental situation in two high schools in the Tuscaloosa County School System, Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Four teachers, one in the tenth grade, two in the eleventh grade, and one in the twelfth grade taught two classes: one by the experimental program, and one by the traditional textbook grammar-oriented program.

The teachers were given training by the researcher in the use of the experimental materials and in the testing procedures which were to be used. Both the experimental and the control groups were involved in six weeks of composition-focused instruction and the testing procedures were two: (1) pre and post tests of the California Achievement Senior High School Language Level 5 (Form B for the pretest, and Form A for the posttest), and (2) pre and post tests writing sentences and paragraphs similar to those in which they had received instruction. The subskills of capitalization, word usage, and punctuation were evaluated by the scoring instructions which accompany the California Language Tests: the writing samples were graded by independent readers, in accordance with grading criteria furnished by the researcher. These criteria were based upon the previous instruction received by the students and were ranked on a one (low) to five (high) scale for quality.

Seven null hypotheses were tested by an analysis of variance using the F ratio: (1) capitalization skills, (2) word usage skills, (3) punctuation skills, (4) descriptive sentences, (5) descriptive paragraphs, (6) narrative paragraphs, and (7) five-paragraph expository compositions. Pre and post scores revealed a statistically significant difference between students in the experimental group and in the control group in the quality of their writing improvement as measured by the pre and post grading procedures. Pre and post test scores revealed no statistically significant difference between students in the experimental group and in the control group in the improvement of the mechanical subskills.

Certain conclusions were made concerning the data. The experimental program did prove superior at all three grade levels 10, 11, and 12 to the traditional program for teaching composition in the quality of writing improvement for descriptive sentences, descriptive paragraphs, narrative paragraphs, and the five-paragraph composition. The experimental program did not prove superior to the traditional one in the improvement of the subskills of capitalization, word usage, and punctuation. Recommendations included the suggestion that students be taught a structured composition program and that teachers majoring in secondary education (English) and teachers in service should be given training in the methods of teaching such a program. Further studies should be undertaken to replicate this study. It was also suggested that a follow-up study could indicate the success of this program as a base for sequential learning in composition.

CHANGING PATTERNS IN GOALS, METHODS, AND GRADING THEORIES IN THE TEACHING OF WRITTEN COMPOSITION AS EVIDENCED IN PROFESSIONAL LITERATURE 1930 – 1976 Order No. 7814658

WYNN, Dorothy Florine, Ph.D. Saint Louis University, 1978. 201pp.

Professional literature shows democracy actively challenged modern education, specifying particularly the handling of English composition as a curriculum subject and a tool of communication. Increased concrete evidence of students' inability to communicate effectively undermined the support for the skill so pertinent to success in all democratic living.

Educators responded through the various media to the sharp attacks on English communication courses, suggesting varied solutions for the problems. The problems of both critic and educator gave rise to this study which attempted to present an historical development of the English composition course dilemma.

The purpose of this study was to ascertain historically how the educational systems attempted to attain effective communication through the changing patterns in goals, methods, and grading theories in the teaching of written communication as evidenced in professional literature produced during the years 1930–1976.

Some limitations, however, were incorporated in the treatment. The problem was first limited to the teaching of written English composition. It was limited further to only three aspects of written communication – goals or objectives; designs, methods, or plans; and evaluation or grading theories.

The lower chronological limits of the problem were set by the financial crash between the two World Wars which led to political, economic, and social changes that extended the "period of infancy" for the World War I babies and flooded the education market at the secondary school level. The upper chronological limits were marked by the year 1976, the latest full year for which material was available at the time this study began. The study was thus concerned with about forty-five years.

The lower educational limit was the seventh grade. The upper limit was the freshman year of college.

The historical method of research was employed and only primary sources were used. Since all of the data were gathered from professional literature, the sources were either those writings resulting from writers' own experiences or those writings in which writers analyzed experiences, experiments, and conclusions of authorities to create direct reflections of the periods in which the writers worked and wrote.

A four-fold task was set for this study: (1) Important goals were selected for the teaching of written communication, as set down by English educators, noting the consistencies or differences running through them during the forty-five years in question, and recording the prevailing patterns and trends; (2) "preferred" designs and methodologies were analyzed, those "to be avoided" were noted and checked for consistencies and differences running through methods of teaching composition during the years in question; (3) Theories of grading and evaluating papers which were proposed as effective by educators during the designated forty-five years were isolated, and the consistencies and differences running through them were noted; (4) The interrelationships of goals, methods, and grading theories were noted where they existed.

This study projected enlarged images of three aspects of written English communication – objectives, methods, and grading theories – on the curriculum screen for the possibility of examining in detail what had been proposed through the years, what changes had occurred, what trends or movements had been influential and how far from solution the teaching of composition dilemma remains. By presenting such an historical development without prescribing, it is hoped that this study will make it possible for concerned composition educators to construct the appropriate formula which if when put into operation will work for the eradication of the persistent criticism that students never learn to communicate effectively.

AN INVESTIGATION OF STUDENT AWARENESS OF TEACHER CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING WRITING AS AN ELEMENT IN THE COMPOSING PROCESS Order No. 7810551

ZIRINSKY, Hendriekje Bestebreurtje, Ph.D. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1977. 175pp. Supervisor: R. Sterling Hennis, Jr.

Some recent research in written composition has focussed both on understanding the processes of the writing act and on defining stages in the development of writing ability. This study, based on the assumptions that an awareness of audience is an important dimension in the writing process and that the primary audience for writing in school is the examiner teacher, attempted to investigate whether or not students shared with their teachers an understanding of what was expected when they wrote.

A sample of one hundred was drawn from ten classes of tenth graders. Students followed two writing assignments which were varied systematically by mode of discourse (reflexive and extensive) and by specificity of assignment (open and structured). After each writing round, each writer holistically rated ten classmates' papers on two scales: the first gave a personal rating, the second asked the student to predict the teacher rating. Significant positive correlations were found between student personal ratings and predicted teacher ratings. No correlation was found between actual and predicted teacher ratings or between student personal and actual teacher ratings. Interviews with all teachers and selected students provided qualitative data to help interpret quantitative results.

The study concluded that students were not able to predict teacher ratings because they did not understand why teachers rated as they did. However, students generally believed they knew how teachers would rate and their personal ratings were based on a fixed variation from this assessment. Their predictions, however certain, were quite inaccurate. Teachers were found to apply criteria unsystematically, and often to apply criteria which had not been specified in the assignment or in the interview. Successful student predictions of teacher rating interviewed were found to be top English students, however, no generalizations could be made about unsuccessful predictors of teacher ratings.

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